



GET THE OUTDOOR HABIT IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

THE BRISTOL TRIP – PART 1

By DJ

Friday night and all was *not* well. I mean, even the NOGs usually manage to arrive at the hostel before things start to go pear-shaped, but Mr. Cock-up had decided to put in an early appearance on this one. There were supposed to be four people in Nigel's car, but Chris had decided to travel on the Saturday instead, leaving a message on my phone informing me of her decision and assuring me that George would be at the station by five o'clock, waiting to be picked up. He wasn't, of course.

We waited until our sense of embarrassment at blocking traffic exceeded our sense of guilt at leaving someone behind, and then headed for the M4. The drive to Bristol went pretty much as drives to Bristol go. As for the drive *through* Bristol, that was a bit more, well, *challenging*, but as we pulled into the multi-storey car park, we could at least console ourselves with the knowledge that we were parked just down the street from the youth hostel. We weren't, of course.

In fact, we were parked in quite the wrong car park, about three blocks away from the hostel. Trouble is, most car parks look pretty much the same in the dark. And most streets. And most waterfronts.

In the course of the next half-hour, Nigel and I saw quite a lot of pretty-much-the-same-looking streets and waterfronts, but by a combination of dogged persistence and sheer luck, we eventually found the hostel. And a fine hostel it is too, spacious, comfy and, best of all, right in the heart of the city on the waterfront.

Having sorted ourselves out, we headed on foot for Clifton Village, one of my favourite places and home to one of my favourite restaurants, "Pizza Provencale". The place was pretty packed, but we secured a table, and ordered garlic bread, a bottle of the excellent house red and, of course, pizzas. As I recall, mine was a "charcuterie", packed with spicy pork, while Nigel plumped for the "four seasons", a far more adventurous beast with meat, veg and mussels. Personally, I thought he was living a little dangerously with the mussels, but after some dessert and *another* bottle of the house red, we staggered out into the cold yet paradoxically welcoming Clifton night, feeling the satisfaction that only truly well-fed men can know.

Clifton Village by day is wonderful, but by night it is magical. The suspension bridge may not be one of the Seven Wonders of the World but, decked out with lights on that cold, pre-Christmas night, it became one of the wonders of *my* world. We trekked back to the hostel yearning for bed, me congratulating myself for having recommended such a fine restaurant, Nigel declaring his appreciation and stating that he'd had a really good meal. He hadn't, of course.

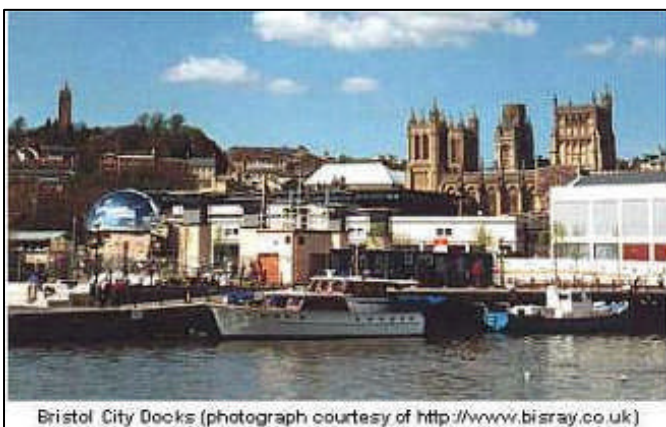
"Well, I warned you mussels can be dodgy", I said to Nigel's slightly grey face the following morning. The food poisoning (for such we assumed it to be) was not, however, severe, and after a couple of hours back in bed, Nigel pronounced himself fit for active duty. Just as well, as Karen had just arrived. Most of our complement were due to turn up later in the day, but Karen, a friend of Ian's from Southampton, had decided to come up in the morning.

Without further ado (in fact, without *any* ado, as I recall) we set about planning the day, undaunted by the cornucopia of delights that is Bristol. One might have said that Bristol was our oyster, though it should be noted that I didn't, as I reckoned that seafood was a bit of a sore point with a certain member of the team. Now being a man who believes in preparation, I had brought with me an excellent book called "One Hundred Walks Around Bristol", and it was to this volume we turned for inspiration, settling on a walk down one side of the Avon to the lock gates, then back up the other side.

And what a great little walk it was, too. We walked practically the whole length of the Bristol Waterfront, coming within sight of the suspension bridge, stopping for a coffee, enjoying a pub lunch and, of course, "doing" the



Photo reproduced with kind permission of website
<http://www.clifton-suspension-bridge.org.uk>



Bristol City Docks (photograph courtesy of <http://www.bisray.co.uk>)

SS Great Britain and the Matthew (people sailed across the Atlantic in that?!!!). Oddly though, the thing that sticks in my mind about that walk is not the "sights" but the residential areas we passed. It seems that there's been a lot of house building along the waterfront, and, for once, it's been done really well, with cosy, intimate little piazzas and houses with odd bits of wrought-iron balcony, many covered with still-blooming climbing plants. It all had a certain Mediterranean feel. It was just, well, *nice*.....

That was the morning taken care of, now what of the afternoon? Well, not far from the hostel there was a German Christmas Market. I mean, *really* German, not just German-style. And what a gem it was!

Housed in a series of little wooden stalls designed to resemble Tyrolean chalets, it offered everything from ornamental oil lamps to mulled wine, and everything top quality, none o'yer tat! It was with a certain reluctance that we tore ourselves away. But still greater things beckoned.....

Make sure you get May's edition of NOGS NEWS to read Part 2 of DJ's epic adventure in Bristol.

NEWPORT GAINS CITY STATUS

By A. Townie

Unless you are an ostrich with your head firmly in the sand, you will have heard the remarkable news that Newport has finally achieved city status, after being overlooked in 1994 and 2000. Newport has been awarded the Queen's Golden Jubilee City in Wales, beating off the competition that was offered by Wrexham, Machynlleth, Aberystwyth, St Asaph and Newtown. Newport joins other successful cities, including Preston, Stirling in Scotland and Lisburn and Newry in Northern Ireland.

The Queen herself, God Bless Her, will be strolling around the streets of Newport in June, checking out the new City as part of the Jubilee Tour. Perhaps it might be a good occasion to enrol her Majesty as an honorary NOG member?

The *Collins Gem English Dictionary* defines a city as, "a large town". With a population of 137,000, Newport at least qualifies on that score. So how come only a handful of this population are interested in the Great Outdoors?

A CAPTION COMPETITION



To help launch the newsletter after an absence of a few months, what better way than to have a caption competition. So, all you fully paid up members of the NOGS are allowed to enter, just provide a caption for the following photograph, shown to the left.

Only one entry per NOG, please. Send you entries by email to Alder@cf.ac.uk, or by post to Mike Alder-Woolf, 29 Merlin Crescent, Newport. NP19 7LG. The winning entry will receive a box of chocs, and be immortalised forever in these hallowed pages. Entries to be received by the end of May 2002.

MOST UNUSUAL CELESTIAL ACTIVITY

I.C. It

If you look to the west just after sunset over the next few weeks, then you will be able to see the rare astronomical display of all five planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn) aligned in the sky. This will only occur 3 times this century, and what's more, this will be the easiest one of them all to spot, even with the naked eye (British weather permitting, of course!) It will progress over the next month and will remain visible until about the 12th May, when Mercury begins to disappear below the Horizon. Now's your chance for good excuse to get out your binoculars and gaze at some heavenly bodies.



HOSTEL STAMPS REQUIRED – FINAL CALL

Our **NOGS CD** is almost finished, but I am short of hostel stamps for the YHA section. Anyone got a copy of these stamps? If so, let me know ASAP via email (Alder@cf.ac.uk) or send me a good photocopy in the post (to Mike Alder, 29 Merlin Cres, Newport, NP19 7LG.) Stamps needed to complete a full set of Year 2000 stamps are:- **Aysgarth, Blaencaron, Blaxhall, Boswinger, Bradenham, Cardiff, Charlbury, Coverack, Crowden, Cynwyd, Elmescott, Eskdale, Hunstantun, Idwal Cottage, Langsett, Lawrenny, Quantocks, Shining cliff, Skiddaw, Stainforth, Telscombe, Trefdraeth, Trevine.**